

South Dakota National Guard

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March 19, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SD Guard, Suriname military host women's workshop

PARAMARIBO, Suriname – Members of the South Dakota National Guard and Suriname military participated in a Women in the Military workshop in Paramaribo, March 11-12.

About 25 females from the SDNG and Suriname's Ministry of Defense and armed forces participated in the annual event, which focuses on issues involving the challenges of women serving in the military and overcoming equality barriers.

The workshop covered a variety of topics including gender equality, equipment requirement differences, challenges and sacrifices mothers face, education, training, and career management and advancement.

The Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy in Suriname, Valerie Belon, attended the event and gave several examples of women in high ranking positions throughout Suriname.

"I commend the people of Suriname in their progress towards equality," she said.

A senior Suriname military official also stressed the importance of social equality.

"Gender equality is society rising to their full potential," said Col. Adolf Jardim, deputy chief of defense.

While Jardim said Suriname is gaining ground, there is still much more work to be done, and the participation of the women in the workshop will greatly help raise the issues.

Two presenters from the SDNG shared their experiences and challenges of serving in the U.S. military.

"Women want, and are capable of, roles that were previously off limits," said Master Sgt. Shelley Reeder, an operations noncommissioned officer with the SDNG's 881st Troop Command. "Meet the challenges head on and let them make you stronger. What you want for your children is what you should want for your Soldiers."

"We take care of each other – not just females – and we build and share upon each other's success," said Maj. Kathy Dirk, SDNG State Partnership Program coordinator.

Dirk reminded the audience to teach the next generation of Soldiers and that female issues cross gender lines.

"These are not just women issues but Soldier issues and need to be addressed," she said.

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The women's workshop was conducted as a part of the South Dakota-Suriname State Partnership Program.

In coordination with U.S. Southern Command, Suriname and South Dakota established a successful security cooperation relationship in 2006 under the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program. Since then, numerous exchanges have taken place between South Dakota and Suriname to share experiences and best practices in a variety of military training and topics.

Capt. Waylon Skelton, SDNG bilateral affairs officer at the U.S Embassy in Suriname, says the annual workshop continues to be a success and solidifies the existing partnership between the two states.

"The overall success of the event is that the subject of equality continues to be discussed and women continue to fight every day for what they and society should want," said Skelton. "The South Dakota National Guard and Suriname defense forces continue to be a strong team and events like this showcase the incredible partnership these organizations have with each other.

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High resolution photos are available at www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard



150311-Z-ZZ999-001: The South Dakota National Guard's Army Maj. Kathy Dirk, SDNG State Partnership Program coordinator, speaks to a group of women from the Suriname military during a Women in the Military workshop in Paramaribo, Suriname, March 11-12, 2015. About 25 females from the SDNG and Suriname's Ministry of Defense and armed forces participated in the annual event, which focuses on issues involving the challenges of women serving in the military and overcoming equality barriers. (Courtesy photo/Released)



150311-Z-ZZ999-002: The Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy in Suriname, Valerie Belon, speaks to a group of women from the South Dakota National Guard and Suriname military during a Women in the Military workshop in Paramaribo, Suriname, March 11-12, 2015. About 25 females from the SDNG and Suriname's Ministry of Defense and armed forces participated in the annual event, which focuses on issues involving the challenges of women serving in the military and overcoming equality barriers. (Courtesy photo/Released)



150311-Z-ZZ999-003: Col. Adolf Jardim, deputy chief of defense for the Suriname armed forces, speaks to a group of women from the South Dakota National Guard and Suriname military during a Women in the Military workshop in Paramaribo, Suriname, March 11-12, 2015. About 25 females from the SDNG and Suriname's Ministry of Defense and armed forces participated in the annual event, which focuses on issues involving the challenges of women serving in the military and overcoming equality barriers. (Courtesy photo/Released)



150311-Z-ZZ999-004: The South Dakota National Guard's Army Maj. Kathy Dirk, center left, SDNG State Partnership Program coordinator, and Army Master Sgt. Shelley Reeder, SDNG operations noncommissioned officer, speak to a group of women from the Suriname military during a Women in the Military workshop in Paramaribo, Suriname, March 11-12, 2015. About 25 females from the SDNG and Suriname's Ministry of Defense and armed forces participated in the annual event, which focuses on issues involving the challenges of women serving in the military and overcoming equality barriers. (Courtesy photo/Released)

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